Kissinger Sanguine On Cuba

Cites Progress On Method to End Isolation

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By Terri Shaw
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Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said yesterday that the United States and Latin America have reached "a general understanding" on how to end the diplomatic and economic isolation of Cuba.

In brief and hurried comments to reporters while entering and leaving the Pan American Union for a meeting of the Organization of American States, Kissinger said he did not expect any "concrete" action on Cuba during the OAS session.

But he added that he has been discussing Cuba informally with the Latin American foreign ministers attending the annual OAS general assembly, and said: "We're coming to some understanding on how to proceed."

Pressed to describe the understanding, Kissinger quipped: "We've got to leave a little room for secrecy."

In another sign of better relations with Latin America, Kissinger read at the OAS meeting a report prepared by the United States and Panama saying that negotiations for a new Panama Canal treaty are almost completed. U.S. ownership and administration of the canal has been one of the most emotional issues in Latin America's stormy relationship with Washington.

U.S. officials declined to elaborate on Kissinger's statements about Cuba. Latin diplomats said there was widespread agreement on holding a special OAS meeting in Costa Rica later this year to amend the Rio treaty, under which the trade and diplomatic sanctions were imposed against the Cuban government of Fidel Castro 11 years ago.

Once the Rio Treaty is amended, making it possible for the sanction to be lifted by a simple majority rather than a two-third vote, another meeting can be held to vote an end to the trade and diplomatic embargo.

Nine of the 23 members of the OAS already have diploamatic relations with Cuba despite the 1964 sanction and some others trade with Havana. Several of these countries have led efforts in the last two years to end Cuba's isolation.

The most recent effort at a foreign ministers' meeting in Quito, Ecuador, last November failed unexpectedly when a resolution to end the sanction narrowly missed getting the required two-thirds majority.

An end to the OAS sanctions would not end the U.S. embargo on trade and travel between the United States and Cuba, a complex of legislation and executive orders dating back to 1960.

However, both Kissinger and President Ford have said that a normalization of relations between Washington and Havana will have to come after the OAS moves to end its collective sanctions, imposed under heavy U.S pressure 11 years ago.

Castro, who has recently expressed a desire to improve relations with Washington, insists that the United States blockade of Cuba must be ended before there can be talks between the two countries. During a visit by Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) last week Castro modified his position somewhat, saying that an end to the American ban on food and medicine exports to Cuba would be an indication of good faith.

See OAS, A8, Col. 1

OAS, From A1

During the first three days of the 11-day OAS meeting, Kissinger has met with the foreign ministers of Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, Uruguay and Peru, as well as attending a lunch and reception for all the delegates to the OAS meeting.

The meeting itself has been more cordial than most. In a continutation of Kissinger's "new dialogue" method of informal talks initiated a year and a half ago, the meeting was held behind closed doors to make possible more frank and speedy discussions.

The joint U. S.-Panamanian report was well received. U. S. sources said both Kissinger and Panama's ambassador to the OAS, Nander Pitty, were applauded for their report, which said the two countries "are convinced that it is imperative to achieve a real and visible progress" toward "a new just and equitable treaty in the near future."

Panamanian Foreign Minister Juan Antonio Tack, who missed the meeting because of a bad cold, said U. S. negotiator Ellsworth Bunker is to go to Panama later this month for talks to iron out the last outstanding problems before the treaty can be signed.

Tack said he was aware of the strong opposition to the treaty in the U. S. Congress and said failure to ratify it could cause "a very serious situation."

The OAS delegates were invited to a reception at the White House last night. The foreign ministers are scheduled to have lunch with Kissinger aboard the presidential yacht Sequoia today.

In remarks prepared for the reception, President Ford said the United States and Panama were developing a "new relationship" to "accommodate the importance of both countries and all of the nations of the world which depend on the canal."

Mr. Ford also referred to parts of the foreign trade law that have been criticized as discriminatory by many Latin countries. He pledged to back efforts to amend those parts of the law that "single out a few nations of the hemisphere for what seems discrimatory treatment."

By Douglas Chevalier—The Washington Post

Juanita Castro: calls Kissinger a 'traitor'